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ABSTRACT

An action research study detailed a program for improving kindergarten students' alphabet identification. The targeted population consisted of low achieving kindergarten students in a growing, middle class community located in northern Illinois. The students' skill levels were documented through data which revealed a lack of letter recognition and phonetic skills. Analysis of probable cause suggests a lack of children's prior experience with the alphabet contributes to these difficulties as well as limited parent support. Growing class size and the increasing number of students with little English language experience also effects this problem. A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, along with an analysis of the problem setting, led to the selection of two teaching strategies: the Sundrom Alphabet System and other supporting alphabet activities. These two interventions were selected because of their appeal to all kinds of learning styles. Post intervention data indicated an increase in student knowledge of alphabet recognition skills. The Sundrom Alphabet System along with additional alphabet activities helped to increase by 14% the number of students who recognized 17 or more letters. Results also indicted that those children who participated on a daily basis, and the students who did not consistently participate continued to behave in that manner. The children who did not participate consistently began to do so more often toward the end of the research. (Contains 36 references, 1 table and 2 figures of data; appendixes contain 2 assessment forms.) (Author/RS)

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IMPROVING STUDENT ALPHABET SKILLS THROUGH THE USE OF THE SUNFORM ALPHABET SYSTEM AND SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

This research report details a program for improving kindergarten students alphabet identification. The targeted population consists of low achieving kindergarten students in a growing, middle class community, located in northern Illinois. The students skill levels were documented through data which revealed a lack of letter recognition and phonetic skills.

Analysis of probable cause suggests a lack of childrens prior experience with the alphabet contributes to these difficulties as well as limited parent support. Growing class size and the increasing number of students with little English language experience also affects this problem.

A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, along with an analysis of the problem setting, led to the selection of two teaching strategies: The Sunform Alphabet System and other supporting alphabet activities. These two interventions were selected because of their appeal to all kinds of learning styles.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in student knowledge of alphabet recognition skills. The Sunform Alphabet System along with additional alphabet activities helped to increase by 18% the number of students who recognized 17 or more letters. It was also found that those children who participated on a daily basis, and the students who did not consistently participate continued to behave in that manner. The children who did not participate consistently began to do so more often toward the end of the research. The recorded student bahaviors that were analyzed revealed that there was not a significant impact on the acquisition of alphabet knowledge.

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

Many students in the targeted kindergarten classes have difficulty mastering alphabet identification. Evidence of this difficulty can be found in screening activities, observations made by classroom teachers, parent conversations, and first grade assessments. The purpose of this research is to improve alphabet identification skills of low achieving kindergarten students by implementing a new instructional method.

Immediate Problem Context

The children attend a K-1 school that was built in 1972. The school is located in a small neighborhood and is surrounded partially by corn fields. The property has a large playground with a sand and blacktop area. There is a variety of climbing and play equipment. The building is one story and contains 12 classrooms, two Regular Education Initiative (REI) and two inclusion rooms, along with a gym/cafeteria, learning center, and music room. Four small rooms are used for speech, social work, and bilingual services. There is an average of 28 English As A Second Language (ESL) students per year serviced in this building.

It is a small school with a population of 423 kindergarten, first grade, and early childhood students. The children are 90.1% White, .5% Black, 8.0% Mexican-American, 1.2% Chinese-American, and .2% Native American, and there is a 9.0% low income population. The attendance rate is at 94.9%, with student mobility at 7.5%, and chronic truancy at 0.0%. In this school district there is an average teacher experience of 12.1 years. The educational background of the teachers in our district includes 41.2% with bachelor degrees and 58.8% with masters degrees. In our building 100% of the staff are women with an average teaching experience of 10 years. The school services early childhood, at-risk, kindergarten, and first grade students, with an average class size of 26 (School Report Card, 1995). The kindergarten curriculum focuses on reading skills, language development, and socialization. The kindergarten students attend gym and music classes once a week for 25 minutes, and learning center once a week for one hour. The school's philosophy is to educate and prepare all children to become responsible citizens in the 21st century. The district believes that all student can learn in a supportive environment (Parent/Student Handbook 1996).

The Surrounding Community

The district is a unit consisting of one high school, one junior high, and three grade schools. The total enrollment for the district is approximately 2,908 students. The majority of this community's socioeconomic status is middle class. The average family income in this area is $42,276 and the average single family home costs approximately $180,000. There are 3.5% of families living below the poverty level and the community has

two sections of low income apartment housing. The school district works together with the community park district to provide before and after school child care. Several school properties are utilized by local soccer leagues. The people living in this town are 83.6% White, 6.7% Black, 7.1% Mexican-American, 2.4% Chinese-American, and 0.2% other (U.S. Census, 1990). Community support for the schools over the years has ranged back and forth from poor to good and it currently remains in the average to low range. Due to the continued growth in this community, a referendum was presented to the community to seek approval for a new school to be built. It took four years to pass because of a lack of community support due to a proposed tax increase. The school was built and the district is now looking to build again. The district is offering several building options to the community and will be asking for their continued support.

National Context of the Problem

Effective results from a program in Baltimore, Maryland, established that students regardless of their skill levels, can learn. The results revealed that all children grades K-3 actually improved their language and reading skills (Slavin, 1989). In the targeted classrooms there are a growing number of kindergartners promoted to first grade unable to recognize alphabet letters. Blanchard and Logan (1988) tested the statement in "Becoming a Nation of Readers" that kindergartners can name, on average, 14 letters. They found that the children actually know only eight or fewer letters.

A longitudinal study of beginning reading in kindergarten provides evidence that there is a definite developmental sequence involved in kindergartner's emerging knowledge about words

(Morris, 1993). Children must be encouraged to go through this process in order to be successful readers in first grade. Barbara Karch (1990) believes that children learn to read and write developmentally by listening, watching, speaking, and writing. According to O'Connor and Notari-Syverson (1995), letter sound skills should be presented to children before actual formal reading instruction and can result in long and lasting differences in the reading ability of students who are at-risk.

There are definite ways to improve reading readiness skills for all children including those at-risk. Cunningham (1990) conducted research on a sample of kindergarten and first grade students. He used direct drill instruction of letters and letter sounds for 10 weeks. The results revealed an improvement of reading abilities at both grade levels.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document students who are low achieving in alphabet identification skills, an alphabet letter assessment (Appendix A) was administered to 56 kindergarten students. When this assessment was completed, a targeted group was established by identifying those students who recognized 16 or less upper and lower case letters.

Of the 56 students, 27 identified 16 or less letters and became the targeted group. A letter identification assessment (Appendix A) was developed to aid in the recording process. A summary of the data collected is presented in Figure one and Table one.

Figure 1. Percentage of Alphabet knowledge Among Kindergarten Students, September 1996.

After collecting and analyzing the alphabet recognition assessments, data revealed that 48.2% of the students involved recognized 16 or less letters and 51.8% identified 17 or more letters. Due to the assessments being completed so early in the school year, it was not surprising to find a large number of students who were not able to identify alphabet letters.

Table 1

Distribution of Alphabet Knowledge Sept.'96

# of letters			Number of Students
Low	0-16		27
Middle	17-33		8
High	34-52		21
Letters	52	Total # of Students	56

Of the 56 students assessed during the month of September, 27 students recognized 16 or less letters, eight children recognized between 17 and 33 upper and lower case letters, and 21 students identified between 34 and 52 alphabet letters. The data distribution documented in this table reveals that the majority of students fall into the high and low range of identifying upper and lower case letters. It is evident that a small proportion of students also fall into the middle range. A low proportion of kindergarten students have the tendency to fall in the middle range. This can make it difficult to teach to children at all skill levels. The data reveals that there are a large number of students who start the kindergarten year who are not familiar with alphabet letters. This information reveals that some type of intervention, such as The Sunform Alphabet System is needed.

Probable Causes

The literature suggests many underlying causes that contribute to the difficulties many kindergartners have with alphabet letter skills. The lack of children's prior experiences with print and learning materials, and students speaking languages other than English can effect student's ability to acquire academic skills. Average class size and teaching techniques are contributing to this problem as well as the economic factors many students face.

Many children enter kindergarten lacking prior knowledge of the alphabet. They may not have attended preschool, or it is possible that their parents did not provide them with enough learning materials to familiarize them with books and letters. A number of students do not have reading materials readily available at home. Lenora Cook (1993), created a lending library in her classroom which parents and students responded favorably to. According to Dingboom (1994), a lack of preschool literature experience as well as parents not sharing reading materials with their children can be associated with students not developing reading readiness skills.

Most teachers agree that in order to accomplish their job, parent support is essential for their children's success. According to Solsken (1993), the attitudes that children develop towards learning and school are directly influenced by the literary orientations they establish at home. Time pressures on parents schedules today infringe on the amount of time they spend with their children. A survey completed by parents detailed their concerns about the time spent with their children at home. They expressed concerns about being able to take a leave from work to

care for their children and simply have quality time to spend with their families (Podmore, 1994). Parents can be stressed, distracted, or so exhausted that they may find it difficult to sit down with their children and share quality learning time (Zemelman & Others, 1993). Parents may need suggestions for incorporating learning activities into their daily routine.

In the last five years there has been a noticeable increase in the enrollment of non-English speaking students. These children have difficulty mastering the English language as well as alphabet skills. There is also a proportion of the student population that have families that are struggling economically. These two issues may have a direct affect on how well students are able to acquire alphabet identification skills. According to Beach (1995), poverty and English as a second language have an impact on alphabet skill development of students who must deal with these issues.

Ask any teacher about class size and most likely they will tell you that the smaller the class is the more quality learning time the students will receive. Results from a study of class size on reading readiness achievement of kindergartners revealed that a small class size can significantly effect reading achievement. Students in smaller classes tend to score higher on basic skills compared with students in larger classes (Jacobs, 1987).

The teaching strategies and techniques used in the classroom by the teacher can positively or negatively influence how well students will learn. Children learn in many different ways and they respond to many different teaching styles. Teachers need to recognize this and use techniques that will meet the needs and

styles of all students. Problems can begin for children if they are not taught in a developmentally appropriate manner. Many traditional skills-based teaching strategies do not take the child's developmental stages into consideration. A study done by Wise (1993), surveyed parents and teachers and found that the majority of both agree that developmentally appropriate teaching methods should be used. Parents also felt that an integrated approach would be even better. This survey suggests that informed parents and trained teachers are essential to the developmental progress of children (Wise, 1993). Staff development and effective teacher inservices are effective ways to keep teachers informed and up-to-date with the current educational trends (Zemelman & Others, 1993).

There are many causes that contribute to the difficulties many kindergartners have in learning alphabet identification skills. Parents and educators need to be aware of these causes and use this knowledge to create and implement positive solutions.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Teaching strategies can be changed to provide better instruction in reading readiness skills. A survey of effective teachers revealed their techniques and why they work. Providing similar instruction to all students along with additional support to some, modeling to children, and creating a literate classroom environment are all ways to enhance students learning (Pressley & Others, 1995). Teachers should model reading and encourage students to choose their own books which will in turn motivate them to read and create a desire to learn (Zemelman, 1993). By changing techniques teachers can try to meet the needs and learning styles of all their students which will hopefully in turn motivate the children more. Barbara Manz (1991), wrote on the effectiveness of using literature videos in kindergarten classes to motivate beginning readers. Changing teaching strategies may motivate students and get them excited about learning the alphabet and other reading readiness skills.

Parents play an essential role in their children's school experiences. Many parents express a desire to be more informed

about ways they can enhance their child's learning at home. Providing parent workshops can help parents learn about many activities they can do at home with their children. A parent involvement plan was implemented by Menard (1993), to improve reading readiness skills of kindergarten students. Parents attended education meetings, planned a learning fair, communicated with the school by phone, worked at home with their children, and distributed weekly language development packets. Parents responded well to these programs and kindergarten screening scores increased as a result (Menard, 1993). They can learn reading and writing strategies that are developmentally appropriate to use (Neitzey, 1992). Most educators will tell parents that reading to their children daily can be one of the most valuable activities they can do. According to Ediger (1992), if parents take time to read to their children, take advantage of local libraries, and enjoy reading themselves, children will develop positive attitudes about reading. Reading games are another way parents can become involved in their child's reading development. A survey stating current beliefs and judgments of public school kindergarten teachers revealed that almost all of those questioned strongly believed that parents should read and play educational games at home regularly to help prepare their children for school (Heaviside & Others, 1993).

Parent programs can also benefit families that are non-English speaking. These families often have children and parents who struggle not only with alphabet skills but with speaking the English language in general. The El Arco Iris Program called Realistic Educational Achievement Can Happen (REACH) is designed to improve the reading readiness skills of Hispanic students with

language difficulties. Twice a week parents and their children watch a television presentation and finish with a discussion led by a bilingual teacher. Parents learn how to continue their children's education at home. The parents and schools engaged in the program saw positive results and improved learning in kindergarten (El Arco Iris Program, 1988). Most non-English speaking students have difficulty because they hear English in their school and go home and hear and speak another language. This tends to slow down the alphabet and language learning process. Armstrong and Hansen (1993), created a program designed to help non-English speaking parents learn to teach their kindergartners literacy skills at home. Activities were created for these parents to use at home, reinforcing the idea that learning can take place in the home as well as at school. There are many ways that teachers can help non-English speaking students in the classroom. Whole language activities including reading aloud and response, independent reading and writing, shared reading and writing, and inquiry activities help to immerse these students in a literate environment, and as a result motivate them to learn (Nigohosian, 1992).

Many teachers are hesitant to group their students together in ways that encourage peer conversation. Teachers may feel they lose control of the students and the activities going on in their room (Zemelman, 1993). When students are talking while they are working, teachers tend to think they are not getting their work done or are distracted from the task at hand. Activities such as literature circles and peer tutoring can enhance the learning potential of a classroom. The talk, noise, and movement created by students when they are grouped together can be positive and

productive when managed well. When students are paired together interaction naturally occurs. This peer tutoring can be effective when a student knowledgeable about the alphabet is paired with a child who has limited experience with letters. This sharing of knowledge between the two students naturally occurs (Zemelman, 1993). Literature circles are book discussion groups and can also encourage positive discussions. Grouping children together in literature circles or peer tutoring requires a lot of classroom management from the teacher. When these activities are done well, the students are immersed in conversations and as a result are learning reading readiness skills (Zemelman, 1993).

Throughout the years there has been a growing controversy over whether or not kindergartners should attend a full day or half day kindergarten program. According to the research completed by Rothenberg (1995) children enrolled in full-day kindergarten programs showed an increase in positive behaviors when compared with children in half-day programs. We have examined several research reports from school districts that have experimented with both full and half-day kindergarten programs. In Ohio, many public schools implemented The Full Day Kindergarten Program (FDK) in order to enhance students growth and achievement by providing more time for learning opportunities and instruction. The results revealed that 69.4% of the children made significant progress (Lore, 1992). While this research shows many positive gains in students from a full-day program, another study completed in Wilmette School District showed small differences in academic growth between half-day and full-day kindergarten (Nieminen & Uguroglu, 1986). Full-day programs allow for a relaxed and unhurried day which provides more time for screening, assessment,

and quality interaction between teachers and students (Herman, 1984). Half-day programs can be less stressful because they accommodate children's attention spans, level of interests, and home ties (Finkelstein, 1983). Both full-day and half-day programs have advantages and disadvantages, but as long as the curriculum is developmentally appropriate and stimulating to the children, both kindergarten programs are suitable (Rothenberg, 1984).

There are a variety of additional alphabet activities that can be implemented into a classroom to help students acquire alphabet recognition skills. Alphabet computer games that focus on letter identification can be made available to children who learn well on computers. Exposing kindergartners to computer graphic software and word processors allows students to experiment with letters and writing. According to Johnston and Olson (1989), children who are exposed to computers tend to pronounce letter names more often and enjoy creative writing on their own. Making reading and writing materials available to students on a free choice basis may motivate children to create and learn on their own time. It is the teacher's job to provide reading and writing materials and make them accessible and usable to students in a literate classroom environment (Fisher, 1991). Reading aloud to students is essential in developing students reading readiness skills. Hearing books read aloud at home and in the school is important for children, and teachers need to set aside time to read good literature to their students (Zemelman, 1993). General alphabet games, such as bingo, may also reinforce letter recognition and sounds.

The Sunform Alphabet System is another possible solution to the problems many students have mastering alphabet identification and letter sound relationships. This system was created by Mary Lou Sundberg (1994), and is designed to teach alphabet sounds and letters through a neurologically integrated approach. This plan consists of four phases that teach letters by using alphabet cards with picture clues that tell a story about each letter. This teacher directed activity exposes students to auditory, visual, and motor skills that enable them to learn the alphabet skills they need (Sundberg,1994).

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of increased instructional emphasis on the Sunform Alphabet System and the use of additional activities, during the period of October 1996 to January 1997, the targeted kindergarten students will increase their ability to identify alphabet letters, as measured by teacher observations and checklists. In order to accomplish this objective, the following processes are necessary.

1. Assess the students prior knowledge of the alphabet.
2. Implement Sunform Alphabet System.
3. Additional alphabet activities and materials will be used to support the program.
4. A final evaluation will be done to assess any growth.

Project Action Plan

These four objectives will be implemented according to the following plan. The plan begins with assessing the kindergarten students during the month of September, 1996. This will be completed with the use of an alphabet recognition assessment

(Appendix A). The assessment will show what alphabet knowledge the students have and evaluate the children's ability to identify letters. It will then be determined which students will be a part of the targeted group; children who recognize 16 or less upper and lower case letters.

The implementation of the Sunform Alphabet System is the second phase of our plan. The system will be used from October, 1996 to January 1997. It is an integrated approach designed to teach sound and letter formations. Letters are taught in a specific manner according to an integrated motor plan. The teacher materials include alphabet cards with picture clues that tell a story about each letter (Appendix B). There are four phases of this system which will be implemented in 20 minute sessions, three days a week. The children must master all aspects of each phase before moving on the next (Sundberg, 1994).

Phase I consists of three 20 minute sessions on imagery. The sessions introduce illustrations that tell a story about each letter. The pictures teach letter shapes necessary for letter recognition. Children will be able to name all of the alphabet pictures from the clues and letters by the end of this phase (Sundberg, 1994).

Phase II is auditory. Twenty minute sessions focus on visual and verbal instructions to teach children recall of letter sounds. Students will produce all sounds when shown the picture clues and letters (Sundberg, 1994).

Phase III devotes one or two 20 minute sessions to integration of letter skills. These sessions will provide instruction in connecting the correct sounds to the picture clues and letters. Students are then able to relate sounds to the

letters (Sundberg, 1994).

Phase IV, the motor plan, is the culminating phase of the system. Students will receive instruction with specific language in order to learn to write correct letter formations. The letters are grouped according to their shape which allows students to progress from simple to more difficult letter shapes (Sundberg, 1994).

Additional activities will be provided as support for the Sunform System. Literature will be read to students on a daily basis, and discussions about print and content will take place proceeding the story. Alphabet computer games (Appendix C) that focus on letter identification will be made available to the students throughout the year. Alphabet bingo will also be played once or twice a month to reinforce letter recognition. Free choice time will be given to the children four to five times a week for approximately 20 minutes. During this time the children can freely explore reading and writing materials in the classroom. An alphabet activities assessment will be used to record on-task/off-task behaviors throughout the implementation process.

The last component of this action plan is to evaluate students' knowledge of the alphabet. The data collected in this final assessment will be compared with the data collected in September, 1996, before the Sunform System was implemented. The final checklist to be used is the alphabet recognition assessment (Appendix A). Improvements in the students alphabet skills will be noted at this time.

Methods of Assessment

Two methods of assessment will be used during this research. The alphabet recognition assessment (Appendix A), will be used at

the beginning and end of our research. This assessment isolates individual upper and lower case letters for the students to identify. The letters not recognized will be circled and analyzed to see what alphabet knowledge the students have at the beginning of the research and then what they have gained at the end.

The alphabet activities assessment will be used throughout the implementation of the Sunform Alphabet System. This form will be used to record the students' interests and their participation in additional alphabet activities they will be experiencing.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve alphabet identification skills of low achieving kindergarten students by implementing a new instructional method. The Sunform Alphabet System along with additional alphabet activities were selected to increase students' abilities to identify alphabet letters.

The targeted group of students was chosen by assessing the alphabet knowledge of all students in the classroom before implementing the Sunform Alphabet System. Assessment forms can be found in Appendix A and B. This targeted group was established the third week of September, 1996, and was monitored throughout the intervention. During the first week of October, 1996, the Sunform System was taught to the students and was continued through February, 1997. Sunform lessons were taught four times per week. Additional alphabet activities were also incorporated into the classroom. These included literature, alphabet computer games, alphabet bingo, and free choice time for students to explore all classroom materials. An alphabet activities assessment (Appendix B) was used once a week for seventeen weeks

to monitor how on-task students were during these activities. In February, 1997, a final assessment was done on the targeted group to note any changes in students knowledge.

The only deviation made from the action plan was in the length of time that was spent doing each Sunform phase in the classroom. The Sunform System suggests that the teacher spend approximately two to three twenty minute sessions doing phases I, II, and III. The motor plan phase IV, is a more extended time of instruction. In the classroom, one month was spent on phase I, two months doing phase II, and one month on phase III. During the last month of the research, February 1997, phase IV was introduced and it is currently being completed. As this research was being done it seemed that more instruction time was needed for the group of students being taught.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of the Sunform System and alphabet activities on students' alphabet knowledge, an alphabet identification assessment was administered to students to determine which children recognized 16 or less alphabet letters. Those students knowing less than 16 letters became the target group. This assessment was also done with the target grouping February to note any changes. The results of this initial assessment showed that of the 56 students 51.8% could recognize 17 or more letters and 48.2% knew less than 16 letters. In February the target group was assessed again to determine any increase in identification knowledge. The results of the final assessment showed that of the 27 students in the targeted group, 70.4% could recognize 17 or more letters and 29.6% recognized less than 16 alphabet letters.

A summary of the data collected is presented in Figure two.

Figure 2 Percentage of Alphabet Knowledge Among Kindergarten Students, February 1997.

The intervention appears to have had a positive effect on the students acquisition of alphabet identification skills. In comparison to the data in Figure one, found in Chapter 2, there was an increase of 18% in the number of students who recognize 17 or more letters.

An alphabet activities assessment was completed once a week on the targeted group to record the participation of each child. Each week the students were checked for participation, inconsistent participation, or a lack of participation. The behavior assessment process started during the week of October 2, 1997, and ended the week of February 12, 1997. After analyzing the assessments it was found that those who participated on a daily basis always did so, and those who were not consistent remained that way. The only change occurred with those children who did not participate at all. Toward the end of phase III, those students began participating more consistently.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on alphabet recognition, the students showed a definite increase in their alphabet identification skills. The Sunform System and its visual and auditory phases were helpful because they provided a

connection between a picture and a letter sound, which was beneficial to both visual and auditory learners. The story that went along with each letter/picture card really captured the students attention and made an impression in their memory. The motor plan encouraged students to make the transfer of letters knowledge to paper. The additional alphabet activities did enhance the acquisition of letter knowledge. These extra activities were more of a source of enjoyment for the students and motivated them to continue learning through these experiences.

The Sunform Alphabet System is recommended to other educators, however they should be aware that this program focuses primarily on letter/sound acquisition, not letter identification. If letter identification is also a concern then teachers should provide supplemental alphabet activities to teach letter names. Recommendations include teaching the Sunform phases until mastery is achieved in order to reach a high success rate for each child.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ALPHABET RECOGNITION ASSESSMENT

Alphabet Recognition Assessment

Student: _____ Date: _____

Upper Case

C F S P Z R L K N B H O W

D G I M Q T V A E J U Y X

Circle letters they don't Know

Lower Case

d g i m q t v a e j u y x

c f s p z r l k n b h o w

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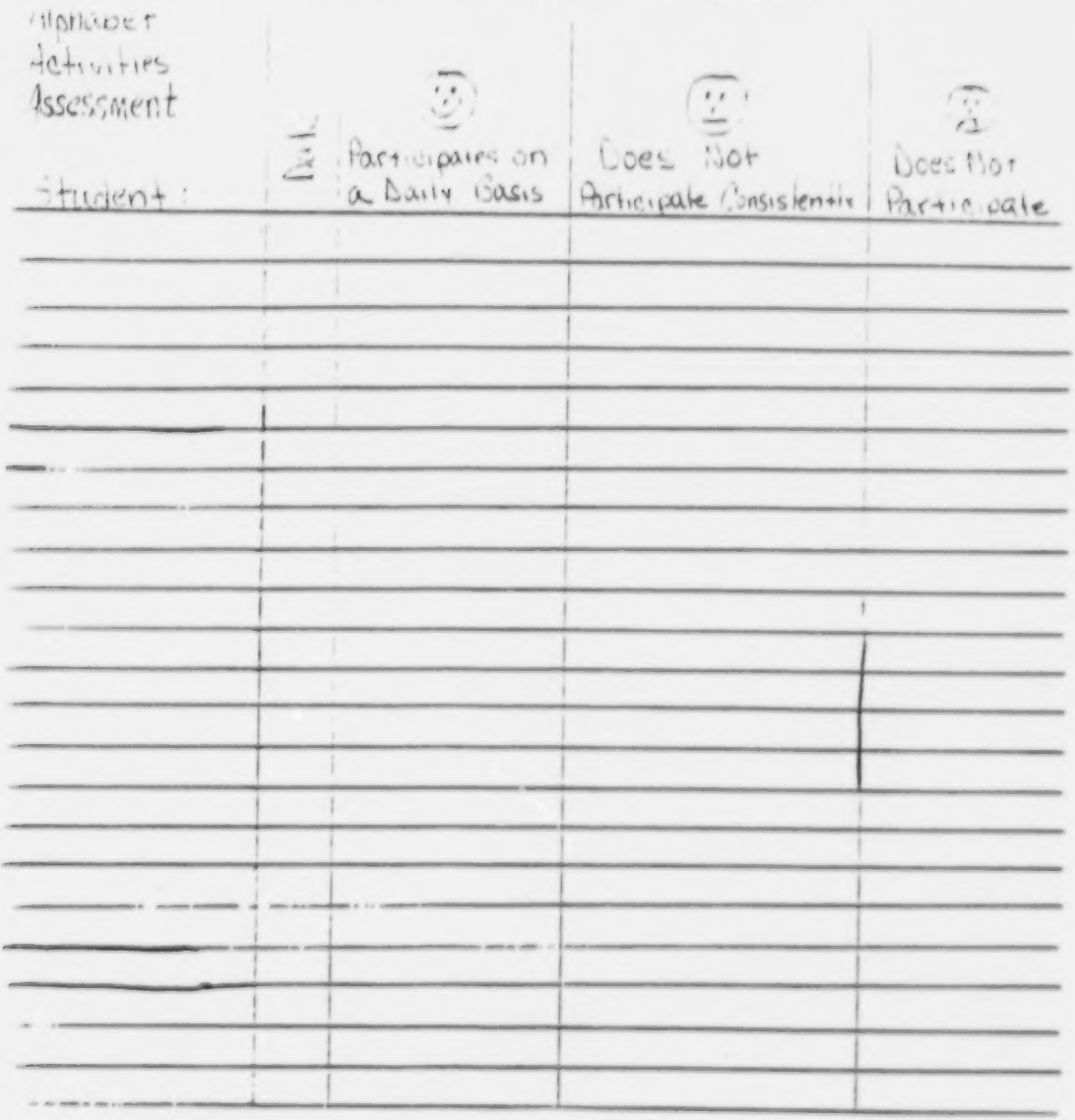
APPENDIX B

ALPHABET ACTIVITIES ASSESSMENT



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APPENDIX C
ALPHABET COMPUTER GAMES

Match Letters

Alphabet

Names

Match Letters	■ Builds discrimination, recognition and matching skills using alphabet letters ■ Develops speed and accuracy when locating alphabet letters on computer keyboard
Alphabet	■ Teaches alphabet sequence ■ Reinforces knowledge of computer keyboard
Names	■ Develops name recognition ■ Challenges memory abilities when sequencing letters to create words ■ Introduces idea that letters combine to form words